

## Open Letter to the Editor: Prop F Answers San Francisco's Right to Counsel Promise

**April 13, 2018 -- San Francisco --** Eviction is a personal disaster that can wreck lives and families. Before someone is literally thrown out on the street—possibly without good legal cause or despite having strong legal defenses—they should at least have the right to a lawyer. If approved by the voters, Proposition F will provide that representation. As a Bar Association of San Francisco-sponsored organization with decades of extensive experience obtaining representation for indigent tenants, the Justice & Diversity Center writes to explain why the Chronicle's objection to Prop F is not well-founded and why your readers should vote for the measure.

Prop F will provide “full scope” representation for tenants—that is, representation throughout the entire eviction case. Prop F will thus restore basic fairness to a process in which one side typically has a lawyer and the other does not. The need is great and cannot be met without public support. In the past two weeks alone, our project has handled two cases in which the landlord refused to negotiate with unrepresented tenants who had strong defenses to their cases. After we found pro bono lawyers for those tenants, both landlords backed down and the tenants remained in their homes. By contrast, we were unable to find pro bono attorneys at the last minute for two other tenants with strong defenses. Each ended up losing their homes in settlements that they felt pressured to enter into because they had no attorney. Prop F would have prevented this. The Chronicle objects to Prop F because it has no income test. This concern is ill-founded because most evictions that we see target low- and moderate-income tenants who have lived in their units for a long time. Indeed, in over 11 years of representing tenants, we have found that less than three percent of our clients fall outside our income limit for receiving pro bono assistance. And even those clients who fell above the limit lacked the disposable income to hire an attorney.

We therefore urge the Chronicle to reconsider its position, and Chronicle readers to vote for Prop F.

Related links:

[San Francisco Chronicle Editorial from March 29, 2018: Editorial: San Francisco's housing troubles doesn't mean every tenant gets a free lawyer](#)

[Full text of Prop. F: No Eviction Without Representation Act](#)

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The Justice & Diversity Center (JDC) advances fairness and equality by providing pro bono legal services to low-income people and educational programs that foster diversity in the legal profession. JDC is the largest legal services providers in San Francisco. JDC's primary purpose is the delivery of free legal services to low-income San Franciscans, as well as the non-profits that serve them. JDC delivers free legal services through its Legal Services Programs division, which consists of the Pro Bono Legal Services Program, Homeless Advocacy Project, and the Immigration Program. JDC provides



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enrichment programs to diverse youth and young adults through its Diversity Educational Programs. JDC's programs serve approximately 9,500 disadvantaged San Franciscans a year, with the overarching goal of assisting the community's most vulnerable members with accessing the judicial system and strengthening their personal, professional, and economic security.